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New York

President:	Ms. Wronecka	(Poland)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Solíz
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	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Sweden	Ms. Schoulgin Nyoni
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Ms. Tachco

Agenda

Peace and security in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (S/2018/432)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda.

The agenda was adopted.

Peace and security in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (S/2018/432)

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Bintou Keita, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; Mr. Maman Sidikou, Permanent Secretary of the Group of Five for the Sahel; Ms. Fatima Kyari Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations; and Mr. João Pedro Vale de Almeida, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of the members of the Council to document S/2018/432, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel.

I now give the floor to Ms. Keita.

Ms. Keita: It is my pleasure to address the Security Council today and provide it with an update on the operationalization of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), relevant international support, including by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), and challenges encountered thus far, as well as possible measures for further consideration in accordance with the provisions of resolution 2391 (2017).

I do not need to remind the Council that the security situation in the Sahel is dire. Just yesterday, we once again received reports of a shooting in Ouagadougou. Over the past weeks and months, local security forces in the Liptako-Gourma triangle, as well as international forces and MINUSMA, continued to face devastating terrorist attacks, including on 18 April in Timbuktu. However, let us not forget those who suffer the most: local populations and civilians, who continue to be intimidated and harassed, live in fear for their lives on a daily basis, cannot send their children to school and/or are unable to meet their most basic needs, including access to food and nutrition. Terrorism and transnational organized crime continue to be two of most pressing security challenges facing the Sahel region, and I fear that we will have to grapple with them for many years to come.

Against that backdrop, I can only express admiration for the member States of the G-5 Sahel, which have taken their fate into their own hands, and commend them for the efforts that they have undertaken over the past year to operationalize the Joint Force. As reported by the Secretary-General (S/2018/432), since the authorization of its deployment by the African Union Peace and Security Council this past April and the subsequent renewal of its mandate only a month ago, notable progress has been made. Member States of the G-5 for the Sahel have begun deploying their troops and equipping the command posts and sector headquarters in all three sectors. Burkina Faso and the Niger have each deployed one battalion on their respective borders with Mali, while the deployment of the Malian battalion in the Litpako-Gourma triangle is under way.

The Joint Force conducted its first two operations in the Central Sector and undertook important first steps towards establishing its human rights compliance framework, including defining screening and monitoring mechanisms to address human rights violations. Nonetheless, much work remains ahead of us. The operationalization of the Joint Force has incurred delays and has yet to attain full operational capability. I call on G-5 Sahel member States to relentlessly follow up on the efforts made to date and deploy remaining troops as quickly as possible so that the Joint Force can resume its operations. I also call on the G-5 Sahel to further clarify the Joint Force's concept of operations and come together to jointly define its end state and objectives. I also acknowledge that the Joint Force continues to urgently require equipment and training, including air and communication assets. Those capability gaps are another important factor delaying the full operationalization of the Joint Force, and the support of the international community will be required to overcome them.

While not underestimating the complexity of military operations, we also believe it is important to address the recent reports about allegations of human rights violations by security forces in the region as a matter of priority, as those may constitute obstacles for the provision of United Nations support. In particular,

I urge the member States of the G-5 Sahel to take advantage of the efforts carried out by the Joint Force, MINUSMA and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to establish a human rights and international humanitarian law compliance framework and cooperate for its rapid and effective implementation, including by supporting effective accountability mechanisms, ensuring the systematic deployment and presence of provost officers at the company level, and supporting the deployment of United Nations teams in countries of the G-5 Sahel.

I also express my profound gratitude to the international community for its sustained and continual support to this important initiative. The outcomes of the international high-level conference on the Sahel held on 23 February in Brussels are a testament to that. An additional €80 million was raised at the conference, bringing the total amount of pledges in support of the Joint Force for the first year to over €400 million, which is almost the entirety of its projected budget for the first year of operations. The member States of the G-5 for the Sahel, the European Union and the United Nations also signed the technical arrangement defining the scope and modalities for providing MINUSMA support to the Joint Force, as requested by resolution 2391 (2017), on which we briefed the Council on 13 April.

I applaud the European Union for managing the coordination hub, which is no small task. The hub is an important tool for coordinating and mobilizing member States' and partners' contributions. I also thank the European Union for its own generous and important contributions to MINUSMA's support to the Joint Force. However, I am also concerned that, while the support mobilized by the international community to date is indeed commendable, the support mechanisms, such as they have been set up by resolution 2391 (2017), will require perpetual resource-generation efforts to fund support to the Joint Force, including replenishing the African Peace Facility. In the medium to long term, it will be challenging to sustain the momentum achieved so far. What is more, the United Nations will continue to depend on others to be able to implement the support measures it has been mandated to provide to the G-5 for the Sahel Joint Force by resolution 2391 (2017).

(*spoke in French*)

To date, despite the significant number of pledges received, the funds necessary to fully implement MINUSMA's support to the Joint Force has still not been received. With the funds we have received so far, the Mission can provide only essential consumable goods and casualty evacuation. MINUSMA is still in urgent need of funds to provide engineering support to allow it to be able to assist in strengthening the G-5 for the Sahel camps in Mali. The lack of secure operational bases in Mali has proven to be a major obstacle to the full operationalization of the Joint Force. The troops who have already been deployed must live and conduct their operations under the most difficult conditions. However, MINUSMA's own experience in Mali demonstrates the need for effective camp-protection measures. In that regard, I call on all donors to make a contribution or to earmark additional funds for MINUSMA's support to the Joint Force. As the Council knows, MINUSMA's support to the Joint Force is limited to Mali itself, which is part of the Central Sector of the Joint Force's operations. Therefore, I also call on donors to step up their support to Sector East and Sector West, which so far have not received support from the United Nations. Finally, few of the pledges have been disbursed to date. I call on donors to disburse them as soon as possible.

Over the long term — and here I echo the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his most recent report — our overall goal must be to consider together which mechanisms will allow for more predictable funding, including through mandatory contributions, as well as support measures and more predictable and sustainable financing, for the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. That would provide better support for MINUSMA and ensure that it can effectively fulfil its own mandate.

Ultimately, any attempt to overcome instability and insecurity in the Sahel will succeed only if it focuses on the link between development, peace and security. The interventions of the Joint Force will remain a security-focused initiative, but must be embedded within a broader and holistic framework, combined with initiatives to improve governance, access to nutrition and basic social services, and creating opportunities for young people. They must also always maintain the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali as their primary objective, as that is the cornerstone of all stabilization efforts in the region.

I welcome the progress made in the establishment of the Joint Force compliance framework, but I remain concerned about reports of human rights violations committed by local law-and-order forces. The Joint

Force will succeed only if it enjoys the trust and support of the local population.

I also welcome the efforts undertaken by the G-5 for the Sahel to strengthen its Permanent Secretariat and its links with the Joint Force command in Sevaré. An important next step, which I urge the G-5 for the Sahel to pursue, is the strengthening of its ownership of efforts to operationalize the Joint Force, as well as efforts to mobilize resources and to therefore establish the support group. The establishment of such an important structure would allow for more concerted and systematic cooperation with the region, the African Union and other international partners, and would ensure that the Joint Force's operations were aligned with a broader strategy for the region as a whole.

The commitment of the United Nations to that important initiative remains unwavering. It is up to all of us to ensure that the Joint Force succeeds.

The President: I thank Ms. Keita for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Sidikou.

Mr. Sidikou (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by thanking the Security Council for organizing this meeting on the situation in the Sahel, a region of the world that is facing a thorny and complex crisis. This demonstrates the Council's interest in our subregion, despite the many other sources of concern for international peace and security.

On behalf of the member countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), I would like to thank Secretary-General António Guterres, whose pertinent and strategic report on the establishment of the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel (S/2018/432) perfectly summarizes the reality of the current issues in that region of Africa and proposes several pragmatic ways to make the international community's response to the multifaceted crisis more effective.

Faced with multiple challenges, which are often minimized or ignored, the Sahel region has gradually become a major area of instability in Africa and is today a growing threat to international security. Five countries at the heart of the Sahelian space — Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger — decided to join forces as an organization and form a core group to face with solidarity the immense shared challenges that threaten the stability of already fragile States and hinder socioeconomic development. Foremost among those challenges is the security crisis, which has for several years, but with extreme urgency recently, been characterized by the proliferation of armed conflicts in our countries, the spread of extremist religious terrorism, drug trafficking and other forms of cross-border crime with international ramifications, the migratory crisis and its most hideous manifestation, namely, the abject trafficking in human beings, organized by illegal immigration channels towards Europe.

On the strictly military level, the mobilization of our five countries and the support of the international community have enabled the taking of a very positive first step forward. As the Secretary-General notes in his report, over recent months, we have been in the process of successfully establishing the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel, which is composed of 5,000 soldiers and which enjoys the support of the international community, in particular through the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and Operation Barkhane, led by France. A so-called technical arrangement was concluded in that regard among the United Nations, the European Union and the Group of Five for the Sahel last February, and was signed by the President of the Niger and current President of the G-5 Sahel, His Excellency Mr. Mahamadou Issoufou. Moreover, in order to comply with United Nations standards in this area, the Joint Force has integrated into its strategic concept of operations the human rights compliance framework advocated by the United Nations. This United Nations support following resolution 2391 (2017) is therefore to be welcomed. It has already enabled us to collaborate during the setting up of the Joint Force's headquarters in Sévaré, Mali, and during the conduct of the first two operations of the Force, namely, Operation Hawbi and Operation Pagnali, in the sensitive border area between Mali, Burkina Faso and the Niger.

In line with the Secretary-General's statements, we must acknowledge that we are still far from reaching a good cruising speed in the concrete implementation of our security response to the crisis that threatens to totally destabilize the Sahel and its surroundings. Although more than 80 per cent of our troops are already deployed at headquarters in Sévaré and in the three operational areas, the fact remains that the troops are still generally poorly equipped, and the military bases and, more generally, the logistics necessary for an effective intervention are lacking, especially in an environment that is often hostile in several respects. In the same vein, the configuration of MINUSMA support

for the Joint Force currently authorized by resolution 2391 (2017) severely limits effective regional coverage and operational control on all fronts identified as urgent for future interventions by the Force to fight terrorist groups and other criminal organizations determined to spread terror in the Sahelian space.

We therefore confirm the diagnosis established by the Secretary-General in his report, which highlights in particular the inadequacy of the mechanism put in place to support the Joint Force. It is "neither sustainable nor commensurate with the challenges we face in the Sahel" (*S/2018/432, para. 74*). Against that backdrop, it would undeniably be a matter for the Security Council to place the United Nations contribution at a more appropriate level, which will include compulsory contributions as the best option in order to be able to provide long-term support. This is an opportunity to reiterate our call to the Council to provide the Joint Force with the strengthened mandate it deserves and the resources necessary to complete its operationalization and ensure its full and efficient response capability. Such an evolution of the Joint Force's mandate would be precisely in line with the recommendations resulting from the consultations conducted last March by the Security Council in the context of improving peacekeeping operations with a view to making them more flexible, more dynamic and more adapted to the different theatres of operations — in short, more effective in a constantly changing world. This is therefore also a good opportunity to take advantage of this more pragmatic and dynamic approach to United Nations interventions.

More specifically, with respect to the solutions for supporting the Joint Force suggested by the Secretary-General and better adapted to the context, as Council members know, before taking up my duties last February at the helm of the G-5 Sahel, I had the honour of leading two important international missions, one under the auspices of the African Union — the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) — and the other under the auspices of the United Nations — the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). In both cases, the good collaboration between African forces and the United Nations led to positive results, particularly in Somalia, through the substantial logistical support provided by the United Nations to AMISOM and, in the case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the establishment within MONUSCO of a rapid Force Intervention Brigade, which is made up exclusively of troops from the countries of the subregion and has been responsible for the most significant successful military interventions by the United Nations in that country since the establishment of a United Nations mission there nearly 20 years ago. I am therefore speaking from experience, having recently had an opportunity to experience the various realities of intervention missions on a daily basis, but always in a context framed by a Security Council resolution.

It is therefore a question of succeeding, on the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel, in setting up an effective operational force with an African backbone but strongly supported by the entire international community, led by the United Nations, in order to send a clear and strong message to all the negative forces and thereby carry out one of the most dangerous missions, whose failure would mean the total destabilization of a good part of the African continent, a region, we should recall, that is a neighbour to the Mediterranean, and therefore the European continent. It is also an important crossroads of traffic towards the rest of the world — America, Asia and the Middle East, in particular. For the nebulous international terrorist network and all related groups, the failure of our intervention would mean offering them on a silver platter the best possible operational basis to organize the almost unlimited spread throughout the world of an even more terrifying mass terrorism than we are already unfortunately experiencing today.

Aware that they are the first to be affected, our States, despite their very limited financial resources, recently undertook major efforts to increase the capabilities of our defence forces and security sectors, which now benefit, on average, from more than 20 per cent of our five countries' budgets, often to the detriment of social sectors, despite their critical nature, which constitutes a particularly painful trade-off for our Governments. The expected share of the five countries to the financing the Joint Force is therefore paid by all, sometimes with some delays. In addition, the trust fund established to manage the financial effort of the international community in support of the Joint Force already has an account with the Central Bank of Mauritania, the headquarters country of the G-5 Sahel.

Following the meeting of our organization's Defence Ministers two weeks ago in Ouagadougou, instructions were given to urgently appoint the members of the Trust Fund Support Committee, including its guarantor, the European Union, with a view to accelerating

its operations. It should also be noted with gratitude that the first financial contributions, mainly African, to date, have already arrived or are in the process of arriving, particularly from Rwanda and the member countries of the West African Economic and Monetary Union. Also, all the mobilization for the Sahel currently taking place must materialize very quickly in a tangible way on the ground so as to restore hope and confidence to our populations, their support being essential to the success in the long term of the multidimensional intervention of the international community that has come to the aid of our region.

It is with this in mind that we are also involved in the in-depth work that is beginning to be carried out, particularly with the support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, with a view to ensuring strict respect for human rights in this fight against terrorism. The promotion of citizens' rights and freedoms should be considered an asset and not a constraint, because it greatly contributes to discrediting the discourse of the backward forces we are fighting.

It is crucial for our success to be long term and not ephemeral, and for the security response not be isolated from the rest of the complex Sahel problem. Without peace and security there can be no development or prosperity. The clear lack of development and socioeconomic progress favours the increase in insecurity and instability. We are therefore faced with a vicious circle that requires a more global solution and a more holistic approach in our response to the Sahelian situation. The security-development nexus must therefore be at the heart of our effort. It should be very tangible on the ground for the people of the Sahel. From here, from the Chamber, the necessary momentum will emerge to transform the commitments made by all into concrete actions in order to rapidly achieve the crucial goal of pacification and of securing the Sahel region in parallel with the implementation of an ambitious socioeconomic development plan that meets the expectations of our populations, in particular young people and women. To that end, the United Nations developed the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel together with the African Union, which we commend. At the specific level of the G-5 Sahel, we have in place a development and security strategy that includes an operational plan — the Priority Investment Programme — for whose implementation we count on the contribution of the entire international community. I note with satisfaction that a number of friends and partners of the Sahel, many of whom are represented in the Chamber, have already indicated their intention to support the Priority Investment Programme.

We can clearly see that the deliberations to find the proper solutions to adequately deal with the immense challenges of the Sahel region have taken place and that multifaceted solutions, as well as some of the necessary resources, have been identified. It remains only to take strong action to realize all those good intentions in an appropriate framework and to thereby meet the expectations of the people of the Sahel, including young people without hope for the future who are reluctant to join the ranks of the retrograde terrorist groups or to attempt the suicidal venture of clandestine migration, and women living in the desert areas of the Sahel who face drought and see their newborns die in their arms owing to the prevailing insecurity that has caused the medical staff to flee the area and, more generally, the population's lack of basic services.

It is high time to act for the Sahel beyond speeches and half-measures. The time for resolute action must begin here in the Chamber under the momentum of the Security Council.

The President: I thank Mr. Sidikou for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the African Union.

Ms. Mohammed: At the outset allow me to commend your delegation, Madam President, for convening this timely meeting and for giving me the opportunity to share with the Security Council the perspectives of the African Union (AU) on the important and urgent matter concerning the situation in the Sahel region and the operationalization of the Joint Force of the Group of Five States for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel).

The African Union remains deeply concerned about the continuing deterioration of the security situation in Mali and of the greater Sahel region as a result of the increasing threat posed by terrorism and violent extremism and its spread to the surrounding countries. The events in that region again remind us of the fact that terrorist groups know no borders. They think and act globally. The international approach in dealing with that scourge must therefore be coherent, comprehensive and integrated. Sustainable and simultaneous engagement is needed in all affected areas and regions.

There is therefore an urgent need for robust international engagement in support of the efforts of the countries of the region. The African Union has been very supportive of the various regional initiatives, in particular the G-5 Sahel and the Nouakchott process, which demonstrate the political will and the commitment of the countries concerned to combating the serious threat of terrorism and transnational crime.

Such initiatives deserve international support that is commensurate with the threat confronting the region. We should be fully aware that the efforts being deployed by the region will prevail only if they continue to benefit from strong international consensus and robust support. The African Union will spare no effort towards that objective and will continue to sensitize its member States and the international community with regard to the urgent need to enhance its support.

(*spoke in French*)

The African Union commends the progress made to date by the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, which has successfully led its first two operations since the establishment of its headquarters in Sévaré, Mali. I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the leaders of the States members of the G-5 Sahel, namely, Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger and Chad, for their renewed resolve to work together for the peace, security and stability of the region.

I would also like to express the gratitude of the African Union to the bilateral and multilateral partners for their multifaceted assistance, including those that pledged at the high-level conference held in Brussels on 23 February. We also welcome the first African financial contributions, in particular those of Rwanda and States members of the West African Economic and Monetary Union.

In that regard, while reiterating our call for the rapid disbursement of the pledged funds, I wish once again to underscore the urgent need to ensure the predictable and sustainable funding of the Joint Force, for, as the Security Council already knows, owing to financial difficulties and the lack of major equipment, the G-5 Sahel Joint Force has fallen behind in achieving its operational capacity. To that is added the fact that the Joint Force cannot lead large-scale operations, ultimately leaving the way open for terrorist groups and organized crime, in particular the trafficking of weapons, drugs and human beings, which is wreaking havoc in the region.

The needs in terms of logistical support and intelligence gathering are also vast and require huge contributions. That is why it seems prudent to us to once again request the support of the Security Council for the G-5 Sahel and to draw attention to the volatile security situation in the Liptako-Gourma region, where the civilian population, symbols of the State and the international forces are increasingly becoming prime targets. In that context, only a robust mandate under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as significant resouces made available to the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, would help to eliminate the identified threats.

(*spoke in English*)

Before concluding, I would like to report that, at its seven hundredth and fifty-ninth meeting, held in Addis-Ababa on 23 March, the African Union Peace and Security Council decided to extend the deployment of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force for an additional period of 12 months, effective from 12 April.

Going forward, the African Union will continue to work towards strengthening the region's ownership and will pursue its efforts to achieve greater coherence within the framework of the African Peace and Security Architecture in the Sahel region. Our objective is to ensure increasing support and cooperation from countries in the region, including in terms of border security and intelligence sharing. An important step in that direction was completed by the signing of the memorandum of understanding for the operationalization of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, concluded on 24 March between the AU Peace and Security Department and the Permanent Secretariat of the G-5 Sahel. In that context, it would be remiss not to acknowledge and to applaud the efforts of Mr. Maman Sidikou since his appointment at the helm of the G-5 Sahel Permanent Secretariat.

The African Union will also continue to lend its support to ensuring the effective implementation of the Algiers process Peace Agreement. That remains the best way to further isolate terrorist and criminal groups. We urge all Malian parties to redouble their efforts in order to ensure the timely implementation of the key provisions of the Agreement.

Finally, the complexity and the multidimensional nature of the challenges facing the Sahel region attest to the necessity for our collective response to fully take into account the strong nexus between security

and development. We therefore need to recalibrate our respective interventions in order to better respond to the national and regional needs to address the root causes of instability and to put an end to violence. In that regard, we are taking steps to map out the various projects and programmes carried out by African Union institutions in the region in a number of areas. These cover infrastructure, human development, health, the environment, agriculture, food safety and the fight against terrorism and transnational organized crime. The objective is to ensure greater synergy in our interventions and align them with the region's priorities, bearing in mind that no lasting security and peace can be achieved that is not rooted in sustainable and inclusive development.

The President: I now give the floor to the Head of the Delegation of the European Union.

Mr. Vale de Almeida (*spoke in French*): I wish to thank for you for providing the European Union with this opportunity to address the Security Council at this briefing. This meeting is a further clear expression of the international community's support for the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) and for the fight again terrorism in the Sahel. The European Union and its member States have long enjoyed close ties of friendship with the G-5 Sahel countries. We are neighbours, and as neighbours we share not only challenges but also hopes. For that reason, the European Union will continue to play its full part, standing shoulder to shoulder with our neighbours in the Sahel.

On behalf of the European Union, I should like to pay tribute to the efforts of the G-5 Sahel countries to foster regional cooperation in the framework of the G-5 Sahel format. We firmly support these cooperation efforts in all their dimensions.

Allow me to focus my remarks on the European Union's support for the operationalization of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. That support is at the heart of not only our bilateral relations with the region, but also of the strategic partnership between the European Union and the United Nations on the maintenance of peace and crisis management. It is also a key component of the trilateral cooperation between the United Nations, the African Union and the European Union.

Since the conference held in Brussels on 23 February, at which the international community pledged more than €400 million, and with the technical arrangement between the G-5 Sahel, the United Nations and the European Union now set up, the G-5 Sahel now has the international support necessary to make headway in the deployment and operationalization of its Joint Force.

We hope that the disbursement by the European Union of €10 million euros to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) will allow for the rapid rollout of effective support for the Joint Force. We invite other partners to use this fully operational mechanism to channel their own financing to MINUSMA. This is key, as the kind of support that MINUSMA can provide on the ground to the Joint Force cannot be delivered directly by any other means or channel, including bilateral ones. The European Union is also preparing a €10 million contribution for the establishment and implementation of a human rights and international humanitarian law compliance framework. We have also provided €70 million for the provision of equipment, infrastructure and services to the Joint Force.

The European Union is convinced that the Joint Force must be firmly embedded within a broader political and institutional framework to guide its operations and to ensure that is but one part of a broader regional strategy. The EU has therefore pledged €5 million to support the G-5 Sahel in the operationalization of its trust fund and the establishment of the support and steering committees and the Defence and Security Bureau of the Permanent Secretariat. We welcome this new dynamic, which bodes well for the ongoing leadership and integration of the G-5 Sahel at the national and regional levels. We welcome the efforts made in that respect by Mr. Sidikou, whose presence here today I welcome.

In this respect, it is vital to bear in mind the recent memorandum of understanding concluded recently between the African Union and the G-5 Sahel, which gives the African Union a coordination role and sees the Joint Force as part of the larger African peace architecture. In addition, the European Union will continue to manage the coordination hub for as long we deem it necessary, in order to help the Joint Force and the Permanent Secretariat of the G-5 Sahel to organize and ensure coherence in the voluntary international contributions to the Force. The hub meets once a month in Brussels, with the participation of G-5 Sahel representatives and all international partners, to take stock of existing support and identify shortfalls. It is also in contact every two weeks with the G-5 Sahel

Permanent Secretariat in Nouakchott, the G-5 Sahel presidency in Niamey and the Joint Force in Bamako.

In addition to the financial and institutional support that I have just outlined, European efforts to build defence and security capacities in the region, particularly in Mali and the Niger, are currently being reviewed in order to extend such efforts to include training and advisory functions to the Joint Force, with full respect for the prerogatives and authority of the G-5 Sahel. To that end, we are working in very close cooperation with the Commander of the Joint Force, General Dacko.

The European Union is also a strong supporter of the development and operationalization of the police component of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. We believe this to be the key to ensuring to ensure a sound legal framework for any efforts to counter organized crime and terrorism. We believe also that this will help to ensure that the desired results are achieved and ensure appropriate protection for the civilian population.

The security-capacity-building missions of the European Union in Mali and the Niger are focused on the setting up by the authorities of Mali and the Niger of police components within the Joint Force, in coordination with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and other partners.

It is also important not to lose sight of the security dimension of the European contribution to the economic, social and political development of the region. In this respect, the European Union has provided €8 billion in aid to the Sahel over the past seven years. The European Union is also a strong supporter of the Sahel Alliance, which was set up to promote, expand and accelerate this integrated approach to security and development and to deliver tangible results. However, we must be clear. There can be no lasting progress if no concomitant headway is made on the political track. We must more than ever before use all forms of leverage at our disposal to encourage the Malian parties to fulfil their commitments.

Allow me to conclude by noting, as the Secretary-General rightly points out in his report (S/2018/432), that just one year after the African Union Peace and Security Council authorized the deployment of the Joint Force, our collective efforts have made it possible to achieve significant progress in the mobilization of resources and support for the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. Looking ahead, it will be vital that we all continue to play our respective roles and show our support for the Force, including by providing ongoing support to MINUSMA. In so doing, we must also ensure coherence in our pledges and assistance to the Force and work with full transparency and full respect for the authority and participation of the G-5 Sahel.

Rest assured of the unflagging support of the European Union as we stand shoulder to shoulder with our neighbours in the Sahel.

The President: I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Ms. Bintou Keita, the Permanent Secretary of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), Mr. Maman Sidikou, whom I welcome and thank particularly for his exemplary commitment, as well as the Permanent Observer of the African Union, Ms. Fatima Kyari Mohammed, and the Permanent Observer of the European Union, Mr. João Vale de Almeida, for their very informative briefings. They demonstrate once again the full mobilization of the international community in support of the G-5 Sahel and the fight against terrorism in the Sahel.

Almost six months after the adoption of resolution 2391 (2017), significant progress has been made in the operationalization of the Joint Force. Following the Brussels conference and the signing of the technical arrangement, the G-5 Sahel now has the necessary support to move forward with the deployment of the Joint Force. Progress on the ground is real, in particular through the operationalization of command structures, the deployment of the majority of troops expected in the Central Sector, the adoption of the operational and administrative framework of the force and the conduct of new operations. The endorsement of the human rights compliance framework is also a very positive development, since it is an essential dimension for the success of the Joint Force and its work in the service of the people. Finally, the ongoing strengthening of the Permanent Secretariat and the instruments at its disposal — particularly financial — is a step in the right direction and must be supported. All of that serves to make the Joint force a potential model for an African intervention force.

Despite our lofty ambitions and the sustained momentum, we must be realistic and reasonable in our short-term expectations. The Joint Force still faces many

challenges, including with regard to the availability of critical equipment such as communications links between its command structures and its contingents on the ground. It cannot be operationalized overnight. It is important that the G-5 Sahel States continue in the coming months to make the best use of the support provided to finalize the operationalization of the force as a matter of priority. That includes the effective deployment of all troops, as well as the transfer of authority to the Force Commander. The establishment of a police component is also crucial in order to guarantee the judicial nature of the activities of the Joint Force and the indispensable link with the criminal justice system of each of the G-5 States. Finally, all allegations of human rights violations must be investigated and, if proved, prosecuted in accordance with the principles set out in the compliance framework.

The fulfilment of pledged contributions is an important condition for the G-5 Sahel States to make progress in the operationalization of the Joint Force. Our responsibility, as partners of the G-5 Sahel, is therefore to do everything possible to ensure that such support is provided as quickly as possible, which is unfortunately not always the case today. When it comes to the Joint Force, we cannot promote expectations that are disconnected from the pace of implementation of our own support. Indeed, we must advance on both fronts.

The coordination of bilateral aid is also crucial at a time when the G-5 Sahel is facing a large influx of goodwill, with limited means of absorption. That is the point of the outstanding work carried out by the European Union through the coordination hub at the request of, and in close cooperation with, the G-5 Sahel States. That work must be continued and supported, in full association with the G-5 Sahel Permanent Secretariat. France, for its part, continues to provide material and operational support to the G-5 Sahel States.

The activation of the support provided for under the technical arrangement, thanks to an initial contribution from the European Union, is also very important. It allows for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) to provide the Joint Force with logistical and operational support directly on the ground, which cannot be provided through other funding channels, including bilateral funding. However, MINUSMA could do even more if additional funding were secured. We therefore call on donors that have not yet made their contributions to participate in the financing of this useful mechanism.

It is clear that the military response is only part of the solution and that there can be no lasting stabilization of the Sahel without making political and development progress. That is a crucial point. On the political front, we must more than ever use all the levers at our disposal to encourage the Malian parties to implement their commitments, including before the next elections. In recent weeks there have been several encouraging signals in that direction, including the inauguration of the Kidal Operational Coordination Mechanism, which must now be confirmed and enhanced. In terms of development, our objective must be to coordinate the actions of the various donors around limited and targeted priorities — defined in conjunction with the partners of the G-5 Sahel and aimed at ensuring a direct impact for the most vulnerable populations. That is the thrust of the Alliance for the Sahel's approach, which fits perfectly into the broader framework set by the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel.

France intends to persistently bring the issue of the fight against terrorism in the Sahel to the Security Council. The situation on the ground justifies that more than ever. The latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/432) presents relevant and appropriate recommendations to provide the Joint Force with support that is predictable, sustainable and commensurate with the challenges. We will continue to work in that arena, taking into account the pace of the operationalization of the Joint Force on the ground and seeking to maintain consensus within the Council on that issue. But expectations remain high, and we must meet them.

In the short term, it is important to call on the international community to provide all the pledged support as soon as possible, as well as to encourage the G-5 Sahel States to continue their mobilization towards the effective deployment of the Joint force. At the end of this meeting, France will submit a proposed press statement of the Security Council along those lines.

Mr. Djédjé (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation thanks Poland for having organized this informational meeting on developments of the operationalization of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel).

I also thank the briefers — Ms. Bintou Keita, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, and Mr. Maman Sidikou, Permanent Secretary of the Group of Five for the Sahel. We also

thank Ms. Kyari Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, whose statement on behalf of the African Union we support, and Mr. João Pedro Vale de Almeida, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, for the relevance of his briefing.

From the report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/432), we note the progress made in operationalizing the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. It also updates us on the many challenges that persist, including the mobilization of international assistance, the implementation of the technical agreement and human rights compliance framework, adopted by the G-5 Sahel countries. Despite those difficulties, the unity of action of the Security Council and the unwavering commitment of State and institutional actors have provided for the robust implementation of the recommendations of resolutions 2391 (2017) regarding logistical and operational support from the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) to the Joint Force. Côte d'Ivoire encourages all actors concerned, in particular the States of the G-5 Sahel, to continue their efforts to strengthen the Joint Force, which illustrates the willingness of African countries to take ownership of their collective security.

Côte d'Ivoire endorses the concerns expressed by the Secretary-General regarding the deterioration of the security situation in the Sahel region and the challenges to the operationalization of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. Progress in force generation, with the Joint Force initially scheduled to reach full operational capacity in March 2018, continues, according to the report, to fall short of the expectations of the international community. Côte d'Ivoire therefore echoes the Secretary-General's call to the G-5 Sahel States to step up dialogue with international partners to strengthen and better coordinate multifaceted support for the operationalization of the Joint Force. Rapid deployment capabilities and a strong grasp of the socio-cultural environment are comparative advantages in combating the spread of terrorism and cross-border crime in the Sahel.

MINUSMA's logistical and operational support to the Joint Force, as defined by resolution 2391 (2017), is a good example of cooperation between United Nations and African peace operations. Côte d'Ivoire therefore welcomes the signing of the technical agreement among the United Nations, the European Union and the G-5 Sahel countries, and hopes that funding pledges will be honoured, thereby advancing the process of the operationalization of the Joint Force.

We also welcome the adoption by the G-5 Sahel States of a compliance framework intended to ensure strict respect for human rights by the Joint Force, whose operational success will depend on the buy-in and cooperation of local communities. The implementation of this compliance framework will require targeted training on respect for basic human rights for Joint Force military components and punishments that make an example of those who violate human rights.

Moreover, even if it reaches full operational capacity, the effectiveness of the Joint Force will remain dependent on current efforts to stabilize the regional political environment. The Joint Force must therefore serve as just one component of a political solution, going beyond security alone, to the ongoing crises in the Sahel.

In the same spirit, my delegation urges parties to seek a political solution to the Malian crisis via the implementation without delay by all signatories of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation, signed at the end of the Algiers process in 2015. Côte d'Ivoire therefore reiterates its call on those involved in the Malian crisis to translate the commitments undertaken in the Peace Agreement into concrete actions. The success of the Agreement is the cornerstone for the restoration of lasting peace and stability in the Sahel.

The responses provided by the Joint Force in terms of security must also be supported by strategies aimed at eradicating regional vulnerabilities and enhancing the resilience of States and local populations to crises, including measures to counter poverty and unemployment, and to improve access to basic social services such as education and health. In that regard, my country welcomes the launch, in July 2017, of the Alliance for the Sahel mechanism to strengthen coordination among donors for rapid-impact projects targeting populations in the most vulnerable areas. It is important to ensure the necessary complementarity between the initiatives of the Alliance for the Sahel and the Priority Investment Programme. With better coordination, the two programmes will help reduce poverty.

Côte d'Ivoire expresses its appreciation for the financial support of bilateral and multilateral partners to the Joint Force. However, my country remains concerned about the long-term financial sustainability

of the Joint Force, given the scale of need and the delays in the provision of the funds pledged.

My country also believes that, in addition to sustainable financing, it is important to ensure proper coordination of the Joint Force with regional security initiatives in order to best manage resources.

The consequences of insecurity and instability, exacerbated by the actions of numerous armed jihadist groups and cross-border criminal networks, extend far beyond the borders of the Sahel. They pose a significant threat to the maintenance of international peace and security, calling for urgent coordinated and effective responses to provide for the stability and development of the local populations. Côte d'Ivoire urges all stakeholders, including the United Nations, the European Union, the African Union and the States of the G-5 for the-Sahel, to continue their cooperation so as to operationalize the Joint Force sufficiently to meet the security challenges in the Sahel.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia thanks your delegation, Madam President, for having organized this important debate. We also express our appreciation for briefings provided by Ms. Bintou Keita, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; Mr. Maman Sidikou, Permanent Secretary of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel); Ms. Fatima Kyari Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations; and Ambassador João Pedro Vale de Almeida, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

The situation in the Sahel presents major challenges in the areas of security, governance and development. The region continues to face a volatile and complex environment, including asymmetrical threats from armed and terrorist groups, as well as transnational crime, including trafficking in drugs, human beings and arms, among other things. Those factors not only jeopardize the stability of the countries of the region, but also represent a threat to political peace processes. They also represent a threat to the civilian population, who are worst affected.

Bolivia has insistently reiterated the need not only to analyse but especially to identify the structural causes of conflicts. In the specific case of the Sahel, those causes have had a profound impact across the region. There is no need to explain that the policies of interventionism and regime change triggered, in the aftermath of the 2011 conflict in Libya, the collateral destabilization of the Sahel, heralding chaos and horrors that continue to this very day.

Unfortunately, in addition to the precarious security situation, the Sahel presents other great challenges. The humanitarian situation requires our attention in more detail. According to data provided by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, eight countries in the region are at risk of humanitarian crisis; out of the 150 million inhabitants, some 24 million require humanitarian assistance and 32 million are at risk of food insecurity. Another 5 million people are experiencing similar conditions, including refugees and forcibly displaced persons — without even mentioning the adverse effects produced by climate change that are further deepening the crisis in the region.

In Mali, insecurity has intensified and clashes between armed groups, asymmetrical attacks, cross-border influences and intercommunal violence have led to mass displacement, further worsening the humanitarian situation. Insecurity has spread from the northern regions to its centre. It is worth mentioning that 5.1 million people — who represent more than 27 per cent of the population of that country — live in the affected areas.

Furthermore, there are some 59,000 internally displaced persons, while almost one in five Malians suffer from food insecurity. With that in mind, we consider it essential to consolidate the political process in Mali, which will ultimately contribute to the long-term stabilization of the region.

Despite the alarming panorama in the Sahel, we wish to underscore the important efforts made by the regional and subregional organizations led by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. We welcome and commend the efforts and laudable political determination of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger in terms of cooperation and operationalization of their forces on the ground. The Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel is an exemplary demonstration of the coordinated efforts between the African Union and the United Nations, as well as of a high level of solidarity among member countries of the international community in general.

We consider it essential that the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, within the operational framework approved by resolution 2359 (2017) and endorsed prior to that by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union,

generate the necessary capacities for the full deployment of military, police and civilian components. In that regard, we highlight the fact that two thirds of troops have already been deployed. We hope that the remaining third will be deployed as soon as possible. To that end, it is imperative that the countries that make up the Joint Force receive technical cooperation and predictable and sustainable financing. It is also essential to finalize the Joint Force operational plan scheduled at the start of this month.

Likewise, the pledges made at the high-level conference on the Sahel of the European Union and other countries held on 23 February in Brussels are an encouraging sign for the strengthening of the capabilities of the Joint Force contingents. All initiatives aimed at achieving stability and lasting peace in the region are vital. We are concerned that those pledges of financial cooperation have not yet been fully met. We reiterate once again that all initiatives in favour of achieving stability and lasting peace in the region — within the framework of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity and independence of the countries that comprise it — are fundamental.

We also believe that financial support for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) should continue. We call on countries to promptly channel their cooperation through the Organization. It is important to operationalize the technical agreement among the United Nations, the European Union and the G-5 Sahel countries in order to consolidate operational and logistical support to the Joint Force.

Furthermore, it is essential to bolster the programmes envisioned in the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, which provides a general framework aimed at strengthening governance, resilience and security in the countries of the region. Strengthening those capacities and, above all, ensuring their ownership and leadership by the countries of the region, on the ground is fundamental. Cooperation among the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, MINUSMA, the Economic Community of West African States and the African Union is crucial within this framework.

We also believe it is necessary to improve and strengthen coordination among the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, Operation Barkhane and MINUSMA in order to avoid duplication of tasks. We stress that each force must have a clear mandate. Intelligence and information exchange mechanisms must be consolidated in order to achieve the full operation and deployment of the Joint Force.

Finally, we believe humanitarian action in the Sahel is critical: it has saved many lives, but millions of people still urgently need it. We strongly urge and encourage the international community to continue contributing technical, economic and humanitarian support to all initiatives that support the peoples of the region in the interest of achieving stability and peace.

Ms. Schoulgin Nyoni (Sweden): Allow me to thank Assistant Secretary-General Keita and Permanent Secretary Sidikou for their important briefings to the Security Council today. I also thank the Permanent Observer of the African Union (AU), Ms. Fatima Kyari Mohammed, and the Head of the Delegation of the European Union, Mr. João Vale de Almeida, for their useful contributions to the discussion.

During the Council's visit to the Sahel in October last year, we witnessed at first-hand the strong determination of the countries of the region to address the security challenges they face. We commend them for their efforts for peace and security in the Sahel, which are being pursued under difficult circumstances. That is evidenced by the tragic loss of lives — of civilians as well as of security forces — in recent months. Let me take this opportunity to extend our condolences to all those affected.

We are encouraged by steps taken so far in the operationalization of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), including the conclusion of a technical agreement and the execution of two operations by the force. It is now time for outstanding elements of resolution 2391 (2017) to be implemented. In particular, we call on the G-5 Sahel countries to deploy the remainder of the troops committed to the Joint Force and to ensure the transfer of authority of their battalions to the Force Commander. That is crucial for the full functioning and credibility of the force.

The implementation of the human rights and conduct and discipline compliance framework to prevent, investigate, address and publicly report violations of human rights law and violations of international humanitarian law is also critical for the long-term success of the force. We welcome the seed funding for the compliance framework provided by the Peacebuilding Fund. We are preparing to provide

further support through the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The functioning of the Joint Force and the compliance framework will be dependent on a functional civilian and police component. For that reason, we welcome the decision taken by the G-5 Sahel Defence and Security Committee last week in Ouagadougou to continue to deepen collaboration between the police forces of the G-5 Sahel countries. We also welcome the support being provided by the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime in this area.

We encourage all parties to actively explore how the concrete contribution and perspectives of women can be ensured and integrated in the implementation of the compliance framework and the operational planning of the force, as well as in the police and civilian components.

We welcome funding pledges made so far in support of the G-5 Sahel, including at the Brussels conference in February. We call on all donors to swiftly disburse funds to allow for the operationalization of the force. We hope that donors will earmark funds for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali to provide engineering support for the camps of the Joint Force in line with resolution 2391 (2017). That is urgently needed, not least in the light of the continuously deteriorating security situation.

We welcome the Secretary-General's strong engagement with the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. The options for further United Nations support to the Joint Force laid out in the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/432) must be seriously considered. As we move forward, predictable and reliable funding is vital for the Joint Force to be able to carry out planning and operations in an effective, predictable and sustainable manner. It is also essential if the Council is to ensure that our repeated calls for regional ownership, demands for accountability and expectations of force output are matched with adequate resources and support.

The G-5 Sahel Joint Force is one of many instruments that make up an integrated, sustainable and regional approach to the situation in the Sahel. The primacy of politics should guide that work, and we agree with the Secretary-General that the Joint Force should be embedded within a larger political and institutional framework as part of a broader and more comprehensive strategy for the region. The establishment of the support group and coordination with regional structures and organizations are important elements in that regard. We also encourage a continued and deepened cooperation and dialogue among the United Nations, the AU and the G-5 Sahel.

Sustainable peace and prosperity in the Sahel region can be achieved only through political solutions, respect for human rights, an equal distribution of social and economic opportunities to the population and a restored and expanded State presence across the region. The situation in Mali is key to that aim. It is therefore important to ensure that the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali proceeds more rapidly and that peaceful, fair and transparent elections are held in July.

The challenges facing the Sahel are many and interlinked. They have implications not only for the millions of people facing insecurity and hunger but also for the wider region and, indeed, the world. The collective efforts of the G-5 Sahel countries to address those challenges, step up development efforts and move towards the full operationalization of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force are essential and deserve our full support.

Mr. Esono Mbengono (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to thank Ms. Bintou Keita, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, and Mr. Maman Sidikou, Permanent Secretary of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), for their extensive and detailed briefings on the activities of the Group and the general situation in the region. We also thank Ambassador Fatima Kyari Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, and Ambassador João Vale de Almeida, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

We align ourselves with the statement made earlier on behalf of the African Union.

My country's Government is following the situation in the Sahel region closely. We are concerned about the continuing deterioration of the security situation in the region, particularly as a result of the escalatimg terrorist attacks in northern and central Mali, as well as in the border regions of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. We would like to take this opportunity to reiterate our firm condemnation of terrorist attacks on the civilian population, the defence and security forces of the countries of the region and the international forces present in Mali, particularly those of the United Nations

Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and France's Operation Barkhane.

As the Peace and Security Council of the African Union expressed in its statement of 23 March, we believe that the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel is currently the best long-term alternative where the security of the region is concerned. Equatorial Guinea pays tribute to the leaders of the member States of the Group — Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger and Chad — for their determination and sacrifices in promoting peace, security and stability in the Sahel through an increasingly effective fight against terrorism, violent extremism and transnational organized crime. However, as the Secretary-General highlighted in his report (S/2018/432) of 8 May, the implementation of resolution 2391 (2017) means that the full operationalization of the Force and securing international financing are currently the main problems and challenges facing us. Progress in making the Joint Force a fully operational structure and securing its international funding has so far been slow and difficult.

It is therefore vital to underline the importance of sustainable and safe support for the efforts of the countries of the region. In that regard, we express our gratitude to bilateral and multilateral partners for their multifaceted assistance to the countries of the Sahel-Saharan region, and we welcome the announcements of the contributions made at the international high-level conference on the Sahel held in Brussels on 23 February with the aim of securing permanent financing and sustainable resources to assist in operationalizing the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. It is crucial that all States and organizations fulfil that commitment as soon as possible in order to help the Joint Force fulfil its mandate. In that context, it is also essential that Africans themselves spearhead efforts to combat terrorism and violent extremism. The Rwandan Government's financial contribution in support of its sister countries of the G-5 Sahel is a step in the right direction. We reaffirm the importance of the Nouakchott Process for promoting peace and security in the region and intensifying its activities to unify all stabilization and development efforts in the Sahel.

Despite the clear will and commitment of partners and the international community to help the region, we believe that the factors that foster Islamist extremism in the Sahel must be considered. The impact of terrorist activities, including those perpetrated by groups that benefit from transnational organized crime, cannot be resolved by security-focused interventions alone. My Government believes that the solution to violent extremism in the Sahel is a comprehensive approach. The growing insecurity in the region demands that we do more than contain violence. We must build a resilient society and institutions that safeguard human security. We also need a broad strategy that attacks the threat's capacity to regenerate itself and that is not limited to merely defending local borders. Military forces can defeat terrorist forces, but it is social and development policies that will prevent their re-emergence through broader strategies.

Finally, legitimate, socially oriented action by the G-5 Sahel is crucial to gaining local and regional legitimacy. That is why it must protect humanitarian law, respond with justice and undertake to protect violated human rights and international humanitarian law.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): Let me first express our deep appreciation to our four briefers today for their briefings, leadership and action.

Recent attacks have demonstrated the increasingly precarious security situation in the Sahel. We commend the decision of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) to join forces to counter terrorism, transnational crime and the smuggling of drugs, weapons and human beings. That decision demonstrates the willingness of the G-5 Sahel countries to take ownership of their own security and deserves the full support of the Council and that of the wider membership of the United Nations. We therefore pay tribute to the important efforts of the United Nations, the European Union and the African Union to support the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel.

We fully recognize that it is not an easy task to set up a regional force in the complex security and political environment the Group is dealing with. We therefore warmly welcome the significant steps already taken by the G-5 Sahel and its member States. However, it is also clear from the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/432) that some important challenges remain. In that context, I will focus on three elements that we believe will define the Joint Force's future and determine its chances of success: first, the need for an integrated approach; secondly, adherence to human rights and the rule of law; and thirdly, adequate financial resources.

First, on the need for an integrated approach, as the Secretary-General emphasized in his report, the Joint Force's success is directly linked to progress on

the peace process in Mali, a point also just made by our colleague from Sweden. The parties involved must take the necessary steps to ensure enduring peace in Mali. As I said, the G-5 Sahel Joint Force is an essential means for countering terrorism, transnational crime and human smuggling. However, we must realize that those are only symptoms. The underlying root causes must also be addressed to bring lasting peace and stability. In that regard, we welcome the G-5 Sahel's development agenda and the initiative by France and Germany to increase international coordination and cooperation with the launch of the Alliance for the Sahel.

That brings me to my second point, on the importance of human rights, the rule of law and the police component. The Joint Force can be effective only if it enjoys the trust of the population. The worrying news of human rights violations in Mali shows the vital importance of rigorous monitoring and accountability mechanisms. We welcome the commitment of the G-5 Sahel and the Joint Force to the African Union's Compliance Framework on Human Rights, Conduct and Discipline and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and to ensuring proper legal follow-up, which they made very clear at the Sahel conference in Brussels in February.

The follow-up meetings held in the region are important first steps, but further progress in the coming months will be essential. To ensure adequate follow-up, we encourage the G-5 Sahel to speed up the establishment of its police component, which should include an adequately trained and equipped investigation team. A strong police component is vital to taking effective action against terrorism, transnational crime and the smuggling of migrants, threats that not only undermine the stability of the Sahel but also pose a serious security concern to Europe. Sufficient resources should be made available to step up these efforts. The same applies to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) Justice and Corrections Section, which plays an important role and should be strengthened. As a proud troop-contributing country to MINUSMA, we will continue to offer our support for efforts to curb such threats.

That brings me to my third point, on the importance of adequate financial resources. We fully recognize that sustainable and predictable long-term financing will further contribute to the Joint Force's legitimacy and effectiveness. I would like to point out here that in addition to our contribution via the European Union, as Ambassador Vale de Almeida just highlighted, the Netherlands has committed an additional €5 million on a bilateral basis. We look forward to further tangible progress on the Force's operationalization as soon as possible, something that will be especially needed for the human rights framework and police component in the next few months. We stand ready to discuss a more sustainable way of financing in due course. We recognize the importance of MINUSMA's support in further operationalizing the Force, but we want to reiterate that this cannot come to the detriment of MINUSMA core tasks.

In conclusion, the coming months will be crucial in deciding the future of the Joint Force. Let us turn funds into equipment, commitments into training and words into action, and let us work together to achieve concrete progress on the ground.

Mr. Tumysh (Kazakhstan): We commend the presidency of Poland for this opportunity to discuss the activities of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) and the ways in which the international community can support the Group's Joint Force. We would also like to express our appreciation to Ms. Bintou Keita, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Maman Sidikou, Permanent Secretary of the Group of Five for the Sahel, Ms. Fatima Kyari Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations and Mr. João Vale de Almeida, Head of the Delegation of the European Union, for their comprehensive briefings. We congratulate Mr. Sidikou on his new appointment and wish him every success in the discharge of his office, for which he can count on our full support.

Generally speaking, our delegation welcomes the progress that has been made in mobilizing resources for the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel. We also commend the improved cooperation of the G-5 Sahel member States with the United Nations, African Union and European Union, which has resulted in the conclusion of the technical agreement. We believe that making the G-5 Sahel Joint Force fully operational will positively reinforce the joint efforts of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the Malian national security forces and other mechanisms to bring peace and stability to the region.

However, the security situation in the Sahel continues to deteriorate due to increased violence by terrorist and extremist groups and their further

expansion to central Mali and northern Burkina Faso. That insecurity is further aggravated by such groups' alliances with others involved in transnational organized crime, drug and human trafficking and arms trading out of neighbouring Libya. We therefore support the recommendations in the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2018/432) and would like to highlight some observations for the Council's consideration.

First, the Joint Force has the potential to be a bright example of an African solution to African problems. However, to succeed, the Sahel countries need the unanimous political support of the Council, the technical expertise of Member States and predictable and long-term sustainable funding from the donor community. In turn, the G-5 Sahel States must speed up the process of making the Joint Force fully functional by resolving its command-and-control issues.

Secondly, we must ensure complementarity and strengthened coordination between the G-5 Sahel Joint Force with all the security forces in the region, including MINUSMA, Operation Barkhane and the various regional frameworks, particularly the African Union-led Nouakchott Process. The Joint Force should find its place within the larger political and institutional framework and strategy that we are planning for the subregion, and that also calls for better coherence between the Sahel countries themselves.

Thirdly, a military approach alone will not address the instability in the region that has resulted from the accumulation of problems, of which violent extremism is only the most recent layer. The Joint Force's counter-terrorism activities must therefore go hand in hand with addressing the root causes of conflict and instability, which can be resolved or minimized to a greater or lesser degree by strengthening local governance, reducing poverty and tribal rivalries, providing basic services and improving job creation. Mitigating the impact of climate change should be another priority. Meeting these objectives will therefore require better linkages between the Joint Force and the G-5 Sahel Permanent Secretariat, whose capacities must be reinforced in order to achieve a performance capable of meeting these enormous challenges.

Fourthly, the situation on the ground requires innovative policies for preventing and addressing violent conflicts and scourge of terrorism. My country therefore proposes using a three-pronged strategy to resolve regional conflicts by strengthening the security-development nexus, as Mr. Sidikou underlined today, along with revamping the regional approach and streamlining the United Nations system to deliver as one. Such a comprehensive overall strategy should be a very effective and sustainable tool for addressing the common threats facing the Sahel and neighbouring countries.

Finally, we strongly support the United Nations peacebuilding programmes in the region in this regard and call on the Organization to finalize its integrated strategy for the Sahel. We also welcome subregional efforts aimed at building resilience in human and environmental systems and increasing peace and prosperity in the region. We particularly commend the initiative of the Alliance for the Sahel, which is expected to bring in a total of €6 billion to finance development projects for the next five years, such as the creation of 1 million jobs and support for rural areas through improved infrastructure and services. In joining the multilateral action in this area, Kazakhstan remains committed to helping the countries of the Sahel to fulfil their vision for peace, progress and prosperity.

Ms. Tachco (United States of America): I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Keita and Permanent Secretary Sidikou for their excellent briefings. We are encouraged to hear that the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) continues to make progress towards full operationalization. We also thank Ambassadors Mohammed and Almeida for their briefings and insights from the perspectives of the African Union (AU) and the European Union (EU). The engagement of the AU and the EU is invaluable as we work together to improve the prospects for peace, security and opportunity in the Sahel region.

The G-5 Sahel and its Joint Force continue to be a priority for the United States. We support the holistic and African-led approach of the G-5 Sahel as the best way to achieve long-term security and development in the Sahel, and we are committed to engaging bilaterally with the G-5 Sahel member States. While much of the Council's focus, as well as that of the international community, has been on the modalities of support to the Joint Force, it is important to note that security solutions alone will not solve the underlying political and economic issues. As many here have noted, security, governance and development are closely linked and countries cannot achieve long-term security without good governance, economic development and respect for human rights. The United States looks forward to

seeing the G-5 Sahel member States build on their good foundations and the G-5 Sahel's priority investment projects. We should therefore not lose sight of the peace process in Mali or the importance of addressing the root causes of the conflict. The Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali emanating from the Algiers process remains the best tool that we have for beginning to resolve the situation in northern Mali, and we urge the parties to implement what they agreed to as part of the Agreement. The Council should consider using all of its available mechanisms, including the sanctions regime adopted under resolution 2374 (2017), in order to foster better political outcomes. There is simply too much at stake for Mali and the region to continue waiting for substantive results.

We are encouraged by the Joint Force's operationalization, but we all recognize that there is a long way to go. We urge all of the donors who made generous pledges at the February conference in Brussels to disburse those funds as soon as possible. We also encourage them to contribute to the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for logistical support to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), as outlined in the technical agreement, in order to expedite engineering projects for the Joint Force.

We are all deeply concerned about the likelihood of violent extremist efforts undermining the security situation in the region. Nevertheless, as the Joint Force's operationalization continues, respect for international human rights and international humanitarian law will be paramount. To that end, we salute the EU and the Peacebuilding Fund's contributions towards the establishment and implementation of the human rights compliance framework included in the technical agreement. However, we were very concerned to hear reports of an incident in Boulékéssi, Burkina Faso, last weekend, where what may have been a violent extremist attack on a Malian soldier under G-5 Sahel command was followed by the deaths of more than a dozen others. We anxiously await the results of the MINUSMA, G-5 Sahel and Government investigations into those deaths, and we call for additional investigations, as appropriate.

Although we all agree that the purpose of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force is an important one, the implementation of the technical agreement should not overstretch MINUSMA. We remain concerned that the Mission does not have the capacity to take on additional tasks as it struggles simultaneously to protect itself and fulfil its mandate. We look to its excellent leadership to make the best determination of when and how to support the Joint Force in the face of the myriad and unpredictable security challenges that MINUSMA faces on a daily basis.

The United States believes that a combination of bilateral and regional support by the Sahel countries and international stakeholders can best address the ongoing financial and logistical needs of the Joint Force. As Ambassador Haley stated in December (see S/PV.8129), the technical agreement represents the full extent of any support role that the United Nations should play beyond continued coordination and technical assistance on a voluntary basis. In February, the parties signed the technical agreement in Brussels and hundreds of millions of dollars were pledged to support the G-5 Sahel and its Joint Force. We would like to reiterate our principled position in that regard, which is our objection to authorization of the use of United Nations assessed funds for the Joint Force under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, a Security Council mandate. The United States will not accept any proposal to move such an authorization forward in the Security Council.

The United States has contributed significant resources to the G-5 Sahel member States, providing more than $822 million in security assistance since 2012, and last October we pledged an additional $60 million directly to the Joint Force's successful deployment and operationalization. We are working closely with the EU coordination mechanism to optimize that contribution, and we encourage other donors to do likewise. The United States believe that that is the best way to increase the G-5 Sahel members' capacity to fight the terrorist and security challenges that they face, and we intend to look for additional ways to support the Joint Force in the near future.

Stability in the Sahel is a multilayered challenge of security, politics, development and humanitarian causes. The attention that those causes have received from the region and its dedicated partners is already leading to better outcomes. Continued international engagement will be one component of that process, but enduring success in the region will ultimately be determined by the G-5 Sahel member States themselves.

Mr. Al-Jarallah (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin by thanking Ms. Bintou Keita, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping

Operations, Mr. Maman Sidikou, Permanent Secretary of the Group of Five for the Sahel, Ms. Fatima Kyari Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, and Mr. João Vale de Almeida, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations for their valuable briefings.

To start with, we are pleased with the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/432) on the latest developments around the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), in accordance with resolution 2391 (2017). We welcome the technical agreement signed in February by the G-5 Sahel States, the United Nations and the European Union, in line with the provisions of the resolution, and we commend their efforts. We followed with great interest the international high-level conference on the Sahel held in Brussels on 23 February, which raised funding to cover the Joint Force's operations for its first year. We welcome the preliminary steps taken to operationalize the Joint Force, and we wish it every success in its efforts to confront the common dangers facing the States of the region. We fully support it in its aim to prevent the proliferation of the terrorist and extremist activity that has significantly damaged the region. In that regard, we would like to recall the engagement of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in supporting the Joint Force in its efforts, which resulted in OIC resolution 45/51-POL on the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, adopted during the annual conference of its Council of Foreign Ministers in Dhaka at the beginning of this month.

The recent developments mentioned in the Secretary-General's report have further contributed to strengthening the Joint Force's capacity to achieve its goals. We appreciate the efforts of the various United Nations bodies in providing technical support and training and helping to set up the Joint Force in various areas, including logistics and human rights. The international community and the United Nations must continue their efforts to bolster the capacities of the Force. We call on the G-5 Sahel States to accelerate the deployment of Joint Force contingents, ensure the continuity of military operations and further back up the progress that has been made in combating the terrorist groups operating in the region.

The Joint Force is operating in a deteriorating security situation in the Sahel. It has to deal with a range of threats, including cross-border and international crime and the trafficking of weapons and drugs in the region, especially around border areas, where the States have very little control, which enables such items to be smuggled from one country to another. We should step up our efforts to control such activities through cooperation between the Joint Force and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). We support UNODC's training seminars, which play an important role in strengthening local authorities' capacities to prevent the flow of weapons and drugs and trafficking in human beings.

In addition to the very difficult security situation, the Joint Force is also operating within the framework of a peace operation that is making limited progress, which in turn has a negative impact on the Force's ability to combat terrorism in Mali. We must promote that peace process and remain committed to the recently signed road map, which will have positive impact on the work of the Joint Force. Nor should we underestimate the importance of development in promoting stability in the region. We are pleased with the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, and we welcome the continued cooperation among the States of the region and the United Nations to strengthen their capacity in the areas of the rule of law, governance and law enforcement, which will have a direct effect on stability and will help create an environment conducive to supporting the work of the Joint Force. On that point, we would like to highlight the Organization of Islamic Cooperation's request to the Islamic Development Bank for funding to be provided to social and economic projects in the G-5 Sahel countries, particularly those aimed at promoting the role of young people and the empowerment of women.

We would like to reiterate our support for the efforts of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force to prevent the spread of threats in the region. It would not be able to achieve its goals without the support of the United Nations, and Kuwait is ready to work with all the members of the Security Council to chart the Joint Force's future plans.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): I wish to express my appreciation to Assistant Secretary-General Keita for her briefing. We are indeed very pleased to see Mr. Maman Sidikou in his new capacity and we thank him for sharing the perspective of the States members of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel). We are also grateful to Ambassador Fatima Mohammed, whose statement we align ourselves with, and Mr. Vale de Almeida for their very useful remarks.

The Sahel region continues to face growing threats from terrorists and other international organized criminals. Coupled with the lack of progress in the Malian peace process, this is exacerbating the situation. The scale and sophistication of the recent terrorist attacks, including yesterday's incidents, as Ms. Keita mentioned, is unprecedented. It once again underscores how important it is that we continue fighting this menace in a coordinated manner by supporting the efforts of the countries in the region, and we want to reinforce what Ambassador Fatima said earlier in that regard.

The role of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel remains essential, and we appreciate the military operations it has conducted in the tri-border area between Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger. We note the progress made towards its full operationalization, including through the creation of a dedicated trust fund, the establishment of a coordination and liaison office for its headquarters in Sévaré and the setting up of the G-5 Sahel's Permanent Secretariat in Nouakchott.

Nevertheless, we also recognize the enormous challenges that must still be addressed to accelerate the Joint Force's full operationalization, as highlighted in the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/432) and indicated in today's briefing. In particular, we understand the Joint Force's urgent need for air assets for intelligence gathering, transportation and communication equipment. In the absence of transport assets, communication between the sector headquarters and command posts, as well as the battalion camps, no doubt presents a serious challenge. Constructing the camp infrastructure and enhancing the Joint Force's headquarters should also be a matter of priority so as to expedite its full deployment and operationalization.

We note the series of high-level meetings that have taken place over the past couple of months to mobilize international support for the Joint Force. We appreciate the financial pledges made by bilateral and multilateral partners, including at the high-level international conference on the Sahel held in February in Brussels. I would be remiss if I failed to commend Rwanda in particular for its demonstration of African solidarity by contributing $1 million in support of the Joint Force's operationalization. We hope that all the recent financial pledges will be redeemed. In the light of the serious difficulties on the ground, as we heard in the briefing today and as was also underscored in the Secretary-General's report, the urgency of this matter cannot be overemphasized.

We welcome the signing of the technical arrangement between the G-5 Sahel countries — Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania, Mali and the Niger — and the United Nations and the European Commission for the provision of operational and logistical support to the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, in line with resolution 2391 (2017). We note the two options proposed by the Secretary-General in his report for more extensive and comprehensive United Nations support to the Joint Force, using assessed contributions to ensure sustainable and predictable long-term financing and support. We hope the Council will seriously consider them and make an appropriate decision in due course.

The development of a compliance framework, in consultation with the G-5 Sahel States and the relevant United Nations offices and departments, designed to prevent and address possible adverse effects of the Joint Force's operations on local communities, is also encouraging. We welcome the memorandum of understanding signed between the G-5 Sahel and the African Union Commission for the provision of equipment, as well as technical and financial support, towards the operationalization of the Joint Force. We also welcome the decision last month by the African Union Peace and Security Council to extend the deployment of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force for an additional 12 months.

The complex and difficult challenges facing the Sahel region cannot be effectively addressed without tackling the root causes of instability. That is why we agree with the Secretary-General that the G-5 Sahel Joint Force is only one part of the broader response. Implementing a comprehensive and holistic strategy on the basis of ownership and partnership with the countries of the Sahel region is the best way forward. In that connection, we note the work that is being done to recalibrate the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel and welcome the appointment of a special adviser for the Sahel. We also note the strategic consultative meeting on the Sahel recently organized by the African Union in Nouakchott with the aim of aligning the efforts of the African Union, the United Nations and other international partners in support of the security and development efforts of countries in the region. The region certainly needs the enhanced and sustained engagement of the international community, and it will continue to be crucial to ensure greater synergy and coherence in the efforts of the African

Union, the United Nations and other international partners in support of the countries of the region.

It is now all the more apparent that the security and development of the Sahel has broader implications for global stability, and we hope the Council will continue to support the efforts of the countries of the region to combat terrorism and transnational organized crime.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): I thank our briefers from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), the African Union and the European Union (EU). I think that the briefings by all these representatives together are a perfect illustration of the partnership approach taken so far and which we need to continue.

The United Kingdom fully supports the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel. Its growing transborder capability, coupled with its regional expertise and knowledge, are crucial to tackling the cross-border threat posed by terrorist organizations and instability in the Sahel.

Since we visited as a Council last year, a lot has been done to build on the existing work that we saw on that trip. However, those efforts must be redoubled if full operationalization across all sectors is to be achieved in the coming months and the cross-border threat addressed. As set out in the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/432), mobilizing funding is a key issue affecting the Joint Force. Despite many donors' generosity while pledging, the majority of those pledges have still not been disbursed, disrupting operations and long-term planning. In addition to our development and humanitarian funding of $380 million over the past three years and our contributions through the EU funds, the United Kingdom has pledged an additional $2.7 million for infrastructure support to the element of the Niger component of the Joint Force and for helicopter-borne medical-evacuation support. We intend to make that funding accessible next month and we strongly urge all partners to make good on the financial commitments they have made to the G-5 Sahel Joint Force as soon as possible.

The United Kingdom recognizes the contribution of the regional actors working for stability in the Sahel, including the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), Operation Barkhane and various EU missions, among them the EU Training Mission in Mali. We strongly encourage strengthening the coordination mechanisms among those actors to ensure that efforts are not duplicated.

In addition to those regional activities, it is important that individual countries continue to take action at the national level. In Mali, we welcome the recent progress that has been made on the peace process, and we hope that this momentum will continue up to and beyond July's presidential elections. Political efforts must be redoubled if we are to genuinely implement the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. We, as the Security Council, should not hesitate to use all the tools available, including sanctions against any who obstruct that process, if necessary. We particularly urge the full participation of women in the implementation and monitoring of the Peace Agreement.

Military operations, including by the Joint Force, will succeed only if they are based firmly within a larger framework of improved security, governance, development, human rights and humanitarian protection. In that regard, we urge the G-5 Sahel States to take forward the establishment of the support group in order to address the challenges facing the Sahel in a holistic and comprehensive manner. Development assistance must address the drivers of conflict, for example by tackling marginalization or helping to promote more accountable governance, and development work must be linked to the G-5 Sahel and, indeed, to MINUSMA's operations. It is important to ensure that military operations go hand in hand with the provision of services for the population. We therefore look forward to seeing the details of a revamped integrated strategy for the Sahel, which must have a holistic, cross-United Nations and cross-border approach to conflict prevention at its heart. This is where the sustaining peace concept will be tested. Let us hope that we will not have to relearn the lessons that we have learned in many other theatres.

Any military action must of course be conducted in full compliance with human rights law and international humanitarian law. We welcome the endorsement of the human rights and international humanitarian law compliance framework, as part of the technical agreement among the EU, the G-5 Sahel and the United Nations, and the G-5 Sahel's commitment to implementing it with the support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and MINUSMA. Failure to protect civilians will feed extremist recruitment and put future funding contributions at risk. In that regard, I support the

comments made by my American colleague about the recent incident.

A solution that addresses the underlying causes of instability is the only way to ensure long-term security in the region. The ultimate solution will be a political one, with development assistance and military support. It must be inclusive and ensure the full and equal participation of the whole of society, including women, if it is to succeed. It must provide economic opportunities and present an attractive alternative to extremism. That is the best way to improve the lives of those who live in the Sahel, and it is the best way to improve our collective peace and security.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation welcomes the convening of today's meeting and the briefings by Ms. Bintou Keita, Mr. Maman Sidikou and Ambassadors Fatima Kyari Mohammed and João Vale de Almeida.

Peru has been following the difficult humanitarian situation and the continuing deterioration of security in the Sahel region with concern. We condemn the latest terrorist attacks and the violent extremism that is especially prevalent in the border areas shared by Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger. Today we would like to highlight three points that we consider fundamental to achieving lasting peace and stability in the Sahel.

My first point is about coordinating responses. The various efforts, initiatives and mechanisms deployed in the field must maintain political and operational coherence, reflecting and responding to the needs and priorities of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) countries, as well as the provisions of the relevant Security Council resolutions. In that regard, we welcome the signing of a technical agreement by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the European Union and the members of the G-5 Sahel, in accordance with resolution 2391 (2017).

We underscore the importance of the operational link that has been established between the G-5 Sahel Joint Force and MINUSMA. We also want to highlight the creation of the European Union Emergency Trust Fund to channel complementary donations and the decision of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union to extend the mandate of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force for another year. We believe that such initiatives should serve to accelerate the required strengthening of the operational capabilities of the Joint Force, especially when a lack of adequate financing jeopardizes the technical cooperation that MINUSMA is called on to provide. We emphasize that financing must be foreseeable and sustainable.

My second point concerns the root causes of the conflict. As has been said, responses to the critical situation in the Sahel must go beyond the military dimension. What is needed is a holistic approach that addresses the root causes of the conflict, promoting the development and relevance of human rights, together with enhanced security. We consider it particularly important to promote the rule of law and economic growth, deal with the effects of climate change and increase women and young people's participation in national processes, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We believe that the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel provides an adequate framework for working to strengthen governance, security and development in the region, and we stress the importance of providing it with adequate resources.

My third point has to do with the peace process in Mali. We note with concern its lack of progress and the deteriorating security situation, which are fostering further radicalization in various areas of the region. We hope that the upcoming elections in Mali can serve to strengthen institutional frameworks and democratic governance and relaunch a political dialogue. We emphasize the importance of promoting extensive involvement on the part of citizens and a greater awareness of the need to include and address the needs of vulnerable groups and minorities. It is also essential to pay special attention to the links between cross-border organized crime and terrorist groups and to strengthen the regional response to those scourges.

I would like to conclude by expressing our support for the efforts of the G-5 Sahel member countries, as well as those of MINUSMA, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the European Union, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, among the other agencies and actors that are committed to achieving a sustainable peace. We believe that the G-5 Sahel is a clear example of how African countries are capable of assuming greater responsibilities in the shared work of promoting peace and security on the continent. However, that requires the strong support of the international

community, including the Security Council and the United Nations system as a whole.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Ms. Bintou Keita, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for her very informative briefing. We listened to the statement delivered by the Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, Mr. João Vale de Almeida, with interest.

The African view of the problems of the region set out by Mr. Maman Sidikou, Permanent Secretary of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), and Ms. Fatima Kyari Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, deserves extremely serious attention from the member States of the Security Council. We agree with their alarming assessments that the level of the threats to security and stability in that part of Africa is unprecedentedly high. The forces of international terrorism in the Sahel are stronger, unfortunately. They have ramped up their activity and are seeking to expand geographically. New radical groups and leaders are appearing. We know the reasons for this. One of the most important is the collapse of Libya as a State, which came about as a result of foreign interference in its internal affairs. We believe that if the situation there is not normalized, it will be difficult to stabilize the Sahel sustainably.

We welcome the 2017 initiative of the States of the G-5 for the Sahel to create the Joint Force to combat terrorism and organized crime. A lot has been achieved during the past year on the practical front. Two successful military operations have been conducted. The completion of staffing capacity at headquarters is in its final stages and mechanisms for financing it are in place. We expect concrete plans for continuing joint operations against the militias to be announced very soon.

At the same time, we were disturbed to hear that the process of forming the G-5 Sahel units has slowed down recently. Progress has not been made in setting up military bases and providing them with adequate quantities of weapons, which will have a serious impact on the forces' readiness to counter the current threats. Those issues will not be resolved without ensuring stable and predictable funding for the Sahel States' joint military structures that are being put in place in the region. In that regard, we call on the external donors that have made respective pledges, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, in the framework of its mandate, and the G-5 Sahel countries to resolve these issues as quickly as possible.

We believe firmly in the importance of further coordinated steps on the part of both African States and the international community for combating extremism in the Sahel-Sahara region. Clearly this evil cannot be eradicated through purely military means. It will be important to work effectively to counter the expansion of extremist ideology, deal effectively with the acute socioeconomic problems of the countries of the region and strengthen their State institutions. In that connection, we note the key role that the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel will play in tackling those tasks.

Russia is considering the possibility of establishing effective cooperation with the G-5 Sahel States in addressing their core regional problems. We are already providing military and technical assistance to a number of States in the region and helping to train military and police personnel. We will continue to contribute to strengthening the military potential of the G-5 Sahel military forces so that their Joint Force can become an effective instrument for restoring and maintaining peace in West Africa.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China would like to thank you, Madam President, for convening today's meeting. We also thank Ms. Bintou Keita, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; Mr. Maman Sidikou, Permanent Secretary of the Group of Five for the Sahel; Ms. Fatima Kyari Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations; and Mr. João Vale de Almeida, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, for their briefings.

In December 2017, the Council adopted resolution 2391 (2017) on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel). Since its adoption, progress has been made in the Joint Force's deployment and support, which China welcomes. At the same time, however, the Sahel region is facing multifaceted challenges, including a fragile security situation, spreading terrorism and increasingly serious transnational organized crime. We call on the international community to increase its involvement and to take an integrated approach to those challenges. I would like to make the following points.

First, we need to step up support for the Joint Force, which represents an important contribution to

peace and security in Africa and the world at large. The international community should fully respect and maximize Africa's leadership in seeking solutions to African problems, and should support the countries of the region and regional organizations in their efforts to safeguard peace and security in the Sahel region. The G-5 Sahel States, the European Union and the United Nations held a successful pledging conference for the Joint Force and signed the technical agreement requested in resolution 2391 (2017). The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) is ready to provide its support, and China expresses its appreciation for that. We hope that MINUSMA will actively provide the support needed once necessary conditions such as funding are in place, and will evaluate its experience in practice. China commends the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/432) for submitting proposals on support, which we will study with other Member States.

Secondly, the political settlement of the relevant regional hotspot issues should be prioritized. On a basis of respect for the sovereignty of the countries concerned, the international community should actively support the countries of the region in taking forward the peace process, promoting national reconciliation and continuing to work to calm and resolve the relevant hotspot issues, thereby helping to create conditions conducive to lasting peace and stability in the Sahel region. Right now, support should be given to all the relevant parties in Mali in order to expedite the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali and seriously address the spillover effect on the Sahel of issues outside the region, such as the Libyan crisis, in order to minimize their negative impact.

Thirdly, support for counter-terrorism efforts in the Sahel region should be increased, given the gravity of the situation. The international community should ramp up its support and help the relevant United Nations counter-terrorism agencies play an active role in that regard. Terrorism is the common enemy of all humankind. We must crack down on it resolutely, whenever and wherever it appears. All countries should adhere to unified standards and act with resolve to eradicate all the terrorist organizations listed by the Security Council. The international counter-terrorism operations should ensure the leading role of the United Nations, including the Security Council, while upholding the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the other universally recognized basic norms governing international relations, and strengthening coordination.

Fourthly, we should appreciate and make the best possible use of the role of regional mechanisms. China values the positive role that African countries and organizations such as the G-5 Sahel, the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States have been playing in seeking solutions to the issues in the Sahel. The international community should strengthen its communication and coordination with the countries of the region and with regional and subregional organizations, and work to organically align the individual strategies of the countries and the region with the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, maximizing their relative advantages to create synergies. The United Nations is revising its integrated strategy, and China hopes that the those efforts will take serious account of the views of the countries in the region and meet the real needs of the countries concerned.

China supports African countries in seeking African solutions to African problems. We also support Africa's regional and subregional organizations, including the G-5 Sahel, in their efforts to address the problems of peace and security in Africa. We are ready to work with the members of the Council and the international community to make positive contributions to the security and development of the Sahel region.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Poland.

To start with, let me thank today's briefers — Ms. Bintou Keita, Mr. Maman Sidikou, Ms. Fatima Kyari Mohammed and Mr. João Vale de Almeida — for their very informative statements on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) and recent developments in the region.

The root causes of conflict in the region, which have created challenges in the areas of good governance and development, are similar in nature and interdependent. The problems and challenges faced are cross-border in nature. In that context, cooperation among neighbouring countries and within regional organizations is crucial for achieving tangible and long-lasting progress. The G-5 Sahel, together with its Joint Force, is an example of such comprehensive cooperation.

We express our full support for the mandate of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force and hope that, with the support of

the international community, it will soon achieve full operationalization. Furthermore, the operations of the Joint Force must be conducted in full compliance with international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Poland supports the G-5 Sahel Joint Force with in-kind assistance. We have provided the contingent of Chadian troops operating within the force with considerable material support. Moreover, we recently decided to provide additional support to the G-5 Sahel Joint Force through Polish training capacities. Responding to the request made by the G-5 Sahel countries, Poland announced its readiness to conduct training sessions in the area of countering improvised explosive devices.

Lastly, Poland would like to fully express its support for the actions taken by the United Nations, the European Union, the African Union and the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, as well as to underscore our recognition of the key role played by regional partners in military operations in the Sahel.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.